

720.977327
G313h

Earl Gerding & Edmund Thornton.
Historical Architecture Tour of
Ottawa, Illinois . (1961?)

ILLINOIS HISTORICAL SURVEY

HISTORICAL ARCHITECTURAL TOUR
OF
OTTAWA, ILLINOIS

SPONSORED BY
FINE ARTS COMMISSION
OF
OTTAWA GROWTH FOUNDATION

May 28, 1961

Prepared by:
Mr. Earl T. Gerding
Mr. Edmund B. Thornton

ILLINOIS HISTORICAL SURVEY.

924 975327
G313h

ILL. 4157

"HISTORICAL-ARCHITECTURAL TOUR OF OTTAWA"


As the final event in its month-long Festival, "Ottawa on Parade," the Fine Arts Commission of the Ottawa Growth Foundation presents an "Historical-Architectural Tour of Ottawa."

Covering a span of more than 100 years of Ottawa's history, the Tour will visit structures that were the homes of important statesmen, soldiers, politicians, and other leading men of their day. In some cases, the buildings themselves stand on their own merit by virtue of the historical events that transpired under their roofs. Particular emphasis will be given the houses and buildings that date from the years of the Great Rebellion and the part their owners played in the violent Civil Conflict.

Of surprising interest will be the discovery that what appear as some prosaic looking buildings in this modern age, were, in their own time, magnificent structures of great local repute. So, too, will be the identification of houses that in an earlier Ottawa commanded generous acreage and magnificent views, that are now pinched for turning room and have lost their vista to the encroaching demands of living space for a modern age. Recognition will embrace both the old and the new, and comment will be made on the several examples of successful contemporary architecture in Ottawa. Attention will be given to the date of construction of the structure (if known), the period and style of architecture, the method of construction, and the name of the original builder and owner. In each instance recognition will be made of the generosity and cooperation rendered by the present owners in contributing to the success of the Tour.

E. B. Thornton

10-256



Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2012 with funding from
University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign

<http://www.archive.org/details/historicalarchit00gerd>

1. Reddick's Library

This imposing mansion on the corner of Columbus and Lafayette Streets was built by Mr. William Reddick in approximately 1860. The architectural features of the house embody details of the Romantic Period of American architecture which draw its inspiration from the Italian Renaissance. The fine stone and brick work is of particular interest as is the detail of the woodwork under the cornice and the eaves. Mr. Reddick was one of the truly colorful characters of Ottawa and La Salle County. He was the County Sheriff, State Senator, a self-made man, and a humanitarian. It is reported that he harbored run-away slaves in his house as a station on the "underground railroad." Reddick was a loyal Democrat who told friends that he "wanted to die under a Democratic president." He made it by dying March 8, 1885, just four days after Grover Cleveland took office for the first time. As a philanthropist he left the major portions of his estate to the City of Ottawa and La Salle County, specifying that his residence be used as a City Library and donating certain lands west of Ottawa as a site for a County Old People's Home.

2. Appellate Court

This handsome structure on the east side of Columbus Street and the corner of Lafayette Street is a well-preserved example of Greek Classic Revival architecture. The detail of red brick and Joliet limestone, together with its well-proportioned Doric columns and handsome pediment, form a harmonious whole worthy of the title "one of Ottawa's most handsome public buildings." The central portion of the structure was constructed in 1857-1860 by the State of Illinois at a cost of \$229,600. The wings were added in 1877 when the Appellate Court System was made part of the State Judiciary. Thus, it served as a State Supreme Court and Appellate Court until about 1897 when the three branches of the Supreme Court at Ottawa, Mt. Vernon, and Springfield were consolidated into one Court at Springfield. Now, as an Appellate Court only, it serves thirty-two Illinois counties as the Court for the 2nd District.

The Court has also served several social purposes, such as the event in December 1867 when the socialites of Ottawa and Chicago gathered for the wedding reception of the daughter of Judge John Dean Caton and her Chicago groom. Among the guests for the gala event was Robert T. Lincoln, son of the late president.

3. Burton C. Cook House

This large, pretentious mansion at 902 Paul Street, built about 1855, is today seriously altered through the modification of its original roof line. The house is an example of the Romantic Period of American architecture, being a conglomeration of many architectural details from the French and Italian Renaissance. Mr. Cook was a member of the Illinois State Senate and later became a member of Congress. He was accorded the honor of nominating Lincoln for his second term as president on the Union Party ticket in 1864. The present owner of the building is the Paul Street Bible Church.



4. Stamate-Megaffin-Cheney House

This little gray house at the corner of Jackson and Paul Streets is one of the oldest residential buildings remaining in the City of Ottawa. This house was built about 1840 and is a noteworthy example of the simple utilitarian design of early pioneer houses. The house was located across the Illinois River from the site of the "Old Town" on the south bank of the Illinois near Fort Johnson and was re-erected on its present site. The front porch was added in much later years and was not a portion of the original structure. The house is built on a sloping site with the original dining and kitchen area on the ground floor to the rear. All rooms are quite small with very low ceilings. Popular legend has it that Chief Shabbona, always a friend of the early white settlers, used to pay frequent visits to this little house when paddling down the Fox River in his canoe and sit on the back porch visiting with his white neighbors.

5. La Salle County Jail

This great brick and stone structure on the corner of Jackson and Columbus Streets was built about 1870 and has served continuously since that time in its present capacity. Of quaint interest is the fact that this may be the only County Jail in the State with a hand-carved walnut rail leading to the second floor, which at one time was the residence of the sheriff.

6. Old Ottawa Township High School

This large brick structure at the corner of Lafayette and Columbus Streets, now extensively remodeled and painted gray, was the Ottawa Township High School from 1878 until the present buildings were completed at their new location in 1916. The structure today is used as the headquarters for the La Salle County Farm Bureau.

7. Old Toll House - Illinois & Michigan Canal

This small, one-room structure on Columbus Street where it crosses the Illinois & Michigan Canal at one time served as a toll house for the many grain barges that were drawn along the old toll path by mules. The old Canal was dug by hand and most of the work was performed by Irish immigrant laborers who were brought directly West from New York after leaving Ireland during the great famine of the 1840's and early 1850's. The Canal ran a distance of approximately 85 miles from Peru, Illinois to Chicago.

8. Lorenzo Leland House

This large American Gothic structure, perched high among the trees on the North Bluff, commands a magnificent view of the City, and standing on the front steps of the house one may look directly down La Salle Street to the First National Bank of Ottawa of which Mr. Leland was at one time president. This house is presently owned by Mr. H. C. Thornton.

9. W. H. L. Wallace House - "The Oaks"

This solid stone residence was started in 1858 by W. H. L. Wallace and was completed in 1860 at a cost of \$25,000. Wallace and his bride, the daughter of Judge T. Lyle Dickey, furnished their house in a handsome fashion with furniture brought West from Boston, Massachusetts. The house itself is an example of American Gothic and French Renaissance architecture. Of note are the thick stone walls and its high degree of preservation after 100 years.

Wallace was a Republican while his father-in-law, Judge T. Lyle Dickey, was a life-long Democrat. As a Lieutenant of Infantry, Wallace fought in the Mexican War of 1845. Much like his famous contemporary, Ulysses S. Grant, this military experience was of great value when the Civil War broke out and all able-bodied men of any military experience were in sore demand. Wallace became Colonel of the 11th Infantry which was badly decimated in the assault and capture of Fort Donelson in Tennessee during the Western Campaign in February 1862. Six weeks later Wallace, then a Brigadier General, was mortally wounded in the holocaust at Shilo, Pittsburg Landing, Tennessee, and died in a military hospital April 10, 1862. The General was returned to Ottawa and was buried in the private cemetery behind the house which had been set aside for the family by his father-in-law, Judge T. Lyle Dickey. The house is now owned by Mr. Joseph O'Brien.

10. Judge T. Lyle Dickey House

This handsome residence, commanding a superb view of the City of Ottawa, was built in 1842 by T. Lyle Dickey, famous Ottawa soldier, jurist, and attorney. The gracious proportions of the house and its lovely setting do honor to the good taste and gracious manner of its owner who was a famous host in the best traditional manner. As a Democrat, Dickey was a political foe of Abraham Lincoln but throughout his whole life the Judge was one of the few close friends that Lincoln ever had. On many occasions when Lincoln was traveling the Illinois Circuit Court he stayed with his old friend in his lovely house here in Ottawa. Charles Dickey, son of the original owner, in his biography speaks with a schoolboy's candor of "Pa and Abe Lincoln" arguing politics in this famous old house on the North Bluff. The Judge's great grandson, Charles Dickey Merrill, is now on the Supreme Court Bench in the State of Nevada. Charles Dickey himself helped to organize the Territorial Government of Hawaii 70 years ago. The house is now owned by Mrs. Philip S. McDougall and her keen interest and appreciation for its gracious architecture and famous history is responsible for its high state of preservation.

11. Old Telegraph Manufacturing Factory

The one-story brick building on La Salle Street now used as an automobile repair shop for W & W Motors was originally the factory in which telegraph instruments were made for Judge John Dean Caton. This was one of the early manufacturing enterprises in the Ottawa area and these telegraph instruments were used during the Civil War when they carried news of the Union victories and defeats, Army and Government orders, all amid the sad messages from the battlefields bringing word of death of men in the Service.



12. Ottawa Silica Company Office

This handsome office building at the foot of Lafayette Street facing Boyce Memorial Drive, was built in 1958 and stands as an excellent example of the adaption of classic Georgian (Williamsburg) architecture to modern, functional use. A conscious effort to maintain authenticity of materials has been carried out while at the same time embodying the use of modern structural design. The use of brick, wood, stone and slate has been blended into a harmonious whole to create a building pleasing to the eye and functional in service. Of particular interest is the use of aluminum window and door sashes and the replacing of heavy stone lintels by light-weight steel beams.

13. Ottawa Avenue Memorial Arch

Located at the end of Ottawa Avenue and the intersection of Boyce Memorial Drive, this pleasing arch is a pure example of the classic Roman Doric style. Of particular interest are the structural properties of this arch, which in its authentic construction would have been built of cut stone, but in fact this modern replica is constructed of reinforced concrete. The arch was built in 1918 as a memorial to the early pioneers of Ottawa of a century before.

14. Edward Swift House

This massive, red brick house at 1355 Ottawa Avenue was built by Mr. Edward Swift in the depths of the financial panic of 1893. The house itself is an adaptation of the French chateau and Romanesque style. All of the timbers and flooring came from the Sanders Mill in Ottawa, and as was the fashion of the day, much of the interior is handsomely done in solid golden oak. Mr. Swift was a leading citizen of Ottawa for many years and was active in the financial, commercial and agricultural affairs of La Salle County. The house is now owned by his daughter, Miss Suzanne G. Swift.

15. John F. Nash House - "Cottage Home"

This lovely house at 1333 Ottawa Avenue was built in the 1850's during the height of the Classic Revival in American architecture. Of particular interest are the pleasing proportions of the house with its well balanced facade and wings. An indication of the skill with which this house was designed is the subtle treatment of the second story which has been placed to the rear of the structure and is not readily discernible from its street view. The house was purchased by Mr. John Fiske Nash from Mr. George Fisher, March 25, 1857. During the Civil War this house served as a temporary hospital for soldiers who had taken ill at Camp Cushman which was located about a mile west of the City. Mr. Nash was a very prominent citizen of early Ottawa and was the gentleman who introduced Abraham Lincoln when he debated with Douglas in Ottawa in 1858.

Of additional historical interest concerning the original owner and builder of the house, Mr. George Fisher, is the fact that when Fisher sold the house to Mr. Nash he moved to the Pacific Coast and supported Lincoln for president in 1860. As a political reward he was named United States Consul to Kanagawa, Japan in 1862. The present owner is Mr. James Renwick.

16. William Hickling House

This house, at the corner of Illinois Avenue and Benton Street, was built by Mr. William Hickling in 1854 on land purchased from the estate of Mr. David Walker of Ottawa. Of particular interest is that Walker originally bought the land from the State of Illinois in 1833, a tract of 90 acres, for \$112.50. William Hickling was the first mayor of Ottawa. The house is presently owned by William C. Kucher.

17. La Salle County Court House

Built of Joliet limestone, this large public building stands on the site of several earlier Court Houses which saw many famous men troop in and out on business of all kinds. These included such figures as Abraham Lincoln, Steven A. Douglas, Judge John Dean Caton and many other well-known men of the day. The present structure may be called an architectural adaptation of the Renaissance and Romanesque Periods. The cornerstone was laid July 4, 1881 amid nation-wide gloom because President James A. Garfield had been mortally wounded on July 2 and his death was inevitable after a week of agony. The cost of this original stone building was \$127,127.04. The building was dedicated in 1884.

18. Zimmerman's Barbershop - Court Street

This small wooden structure, sandwiched in between larger brick buildings, is one of the last remnants of a simple utilitarian style of architecture that was prevalent throughout much of downtown Ottawa during the time of the Civil War. Of particular interest is its slanting tin roof and diminutive second-story windows.

19. Dr. J. O. Harris House

This little house at 527 East Main Street bears little resemblance to its original appearance. It has been covered in brick which hides its original clapboard construction. Its sole remaining architectural features which hint at its early date of construction are the tall, vertical windows on the ground floor and its particular location, set well back from the street. Originally this was the home of Dr. J. O. Harris who was the regimental surgeon for the 53rd Illinois Volunteer Infantry. Dr. Harris later helped found the First Building and Loan Association in Illinois in 1871. The present owner is Mr. Glen Harris.

20. Washington Bushnell House

This enormous house at 622 East Pearl Street, built in 1872, was the home of one of Ottawa's leading political figures in the latter half of the 19th Century. Taking its inspiration from the French Renaissance, this magnificent pile was one of the show-places of Ottawa with its ornate detail, three-story tower and spacious grounds which included a large stable and carriage house to the rear, facing on Chapel Street, and now used as apartments. The house originally had 33 rooms, 6-1/2 baths, with 8'4" ceilings. Bushnell was State Senator and later Attorney General of Illinois. He is credited with backing the first law in the United States which gave women equal property rights. The present owner is Mrs. Anita Connellee.

21. M. H. Hollister House

This large, square brick house at 804 Chapel Street stands on the site of an earlier house whose original deed goes back to 1834. The present house is a conglomeration of the Romantic Period of American architecture embodying details from the Italian Renaissance and Romanesque Periods. The present house was started by Mr. M. H. Hollister who had served some time in the Mexican War of 1845 and tradition has it that he named this new house Montezuma, after a famous battle of that War. Hollister later sold the house to Colonel W. H. W. Cushman, famous resident of Ottawa, who lent his name to the Civil War encampment established west of Ottawa near the Village of Naplate. Hollister was made U. S. Minister to the Argentine and after the Civil War gave up this post of prestige to go to the wilds of Idaho and become Chief Justice of the Idaho territory. The present owner is Doris Wagner.

22. John Manley House

This large, square brick house at 640 Chapel Street dates from about 1864 when it was built by Mr. John Manley, the maternal grandfather of Mr. John Jordan of Ottawa. The house was conceived and built in the grand manner, embodying architectural details of the American Renaissance Period of architecture. There is a large ballroom on the third floor and a comparison of the windows and frieze under the eaves with that on the Bushnell House indicates that this was the popular style of the day. The present owner of this house is Mr. Vernon K. Bellrose.

23. Thorsen-Fleury House

This lovely white residence at 602 Chapel Street, done in the pleasing style of the American Southern Colonial Period, is an adaptation of the classic form. Built on a sloping site, the dining and kitchen areas are located on the ground floor to the rear. The bedrooms and living space are all on the single upper floor. The house was built between the years 1854 and 1857 in what was then known as Green's Addition. Originally begun by a Mr. Thorsen, it was completed by Mr. Fleury. In 1857 Mr. Charles H. Gilman moved from Mendota with his family and took residence in this house, at the time having been elected County Judge of La Salle County.

In July 1861 Mr. David A. Cook, then a student at Northwestern University and later to become the son-in-law of Mr. Gilman, left the University and returned to Ottawa joining the 12th Illinois Volunteer Infantry as a private. He fought with this regiment through its several campaigns and was severely wounded at the battle of Shilo in the Spring of 1862. Because of his wound he did not return to his regiment until the Fall of that year. Upon rejoining his regiment he fought through the battle of Corinth where he was again wounded. As a private he rose through the ranks and was eventually mustered out of Service as a First Lieutenant. Mr. Cook returned to Ottawa and settled in the house at 602 Chapel Street which has remained in his family until this day. This house is presently owned by Mrs. Harry G. Cook.

24. Osman House

Built by Jeremiah Strawn, this handsome red brick house at 532 Congress Street with its buff stone trim and high vertical pilasters stands as a well-preserved example of modified Georgian style with certain Italianate Renaissance detail. Bricks for this house were brought to Ottawa by barge on the Illinois & Michigan Canal. The house is presently owned by Mr. John Paleologos.

25. John Hossack House

One of Ottawa's most beautiful houses is located on the south bank of the Illinois River overlooking the city. The magnificent natural setting of this house and its well conceived and successfully executed architecture reserve for it a place as one of the outstanding landmarks of Illinois. The house was built about 1854 by John Hossack, Scottish-born Ottawan, who came to the City by way of Chicago where he had done contracting work on the Illinois & Michigan Canal. The house itself is a remarkably pure example of the American Colonial style of architecture which one sees so handsomely executed in some of our Southern and seaboard states. The house derives much of its detail and pleasing proportion from a conscious adherence to the classic tradition. Of particular interest are the full two-story columns at the front of the house which lend an air of elegance and formal tension as they rise against the horizontal lines of the gallery and roof.

The builder of this lovely house, Mr. John Hossack, was engaged in the lumber business and in the grain trade in Ottawa and was instrumental in the building of the first Illinois River Bridge. Hossack hated slavery and hid many fleeing slaves in his house as a station on the underground railway until they could be spirited to the next station. At that time, before 1860, such humanitarians were in double jeopardy for violation of the Federal Fugitive Slave Act and the infamous Illinois "Black Laws" which forbade most Negroes to live within the State. In 1860, Hossack and other Ottawans were convicted in Federal Court in Chicago for violation of the Fugitive Slave Law in a famous case involving Jim Gray, a Negro who had reached Ottawa after fleeing slavery in a Southern state. The fugitive was "kidnapped" from a courtroom in Ottawa and sped on his way to freedom in Canada. The house is now the property of Mr. Philip H. Godfrey.

26. 101 West Allen Street

This successful contemporary residence embodies some of the important qualities of a private house set down amidst the crowded living space of an established residential area. The house is of light frame construction with a flat, built-up roof and all main living and sleeping rooms of the house face inward, away from the street for privacy. The conscious choice given to the placement of the house insures privacy for a warm, well-lighted interior by virtue of its southern exposure. This house was designed by Mr. Earl T. Gerding, its owner.

27. McKinley School

The stop at this location is prompted by the desire to point out the architectural and structural features of a contemporary institutional building. The interesting thing to note at this location is the choice of materials and the method of construction used in contemporary institutional architecture. Particular attention is drawn to the light steel framing which in an earlier time would have been made of heavy wooden beams and would have required larger and more massive perpendicular supports, all of which would detract from the feeling of lightness.

28. Trinity Lutheran Church

This striking building is a particularly successful example of contemporary church architecture. Here a departure from traditional form has given an exciting thrust and tension by the bold use of the acute angle and the vertical line. So, too, do we find a soft mellowing of the whole through the use of rough-cut limestone and wood. Piercing the walls are large windows of translucent glass bound by metal window divisions replacing the traditional use of stone tracery. The conscious use of the symbolism of the Trinity is used throughout the building in the many triangular shapes both in minute detail and in the interior framing of the nave.



UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS-URBANA



3 0112 050750014